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ABSTRACT

This final report describes activities and achievements of Project Relationship, a Los Angeles (California) program designed to support the successful inclusion of young children with disabilities and challenging behaviors in publicly funded child care settings. During the 3 years of model development and 2 years of model refinement and replication, the project provided support and staff development to 11 Children's Centers, each serving about 100 young children including 6-12 children eligible for special education services. The program model was based on a relationship based, problem solving framework. Eligible children received support from special education teachers and speech and language therapists on an itinerant basis. On-going staff development sessions focused on three themes identified as priority areas: (1) ways to increase the successful inclusion of children with diverse special needs; (2) ways to improve interpersonal communication among staff members; and (3) ways to develop and implement predictable program practices. The project also produced a training manual and video. Individual sections of the report describe the project's goals and objectives, the theoretical and conceptual framework, the model, issues in model implementation, project effectiveness, and project impact. (DB)

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Delivering Special Education Services in Urban Culturally Diverse Child Care Centers To Preschool Age Children With Disabilities, Prenatally Exposed To Drugs/Alcohol, Referred By Protective Services Or Born To Teenage Mothers

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PROJECT RELATIONSHIP

FINAL REPORT

Early Education Program For Children With Disabilities
U.S. Department of Education
Grant Number: H024B00000
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II. ABSTRACT

Delivering Special Education Services in Urban Culturally Diverse Child Care Centers To Preschool Age Children With Disabilities, Prenatally Exposed To Drugs/Alcohol, Referred By Protective Services Or Born To Teenage Mothers

PROJECT RELATIONSHIP

Project Relationship was designed to support the successful inclusion of young children with disabilities and challenging behavior in publicly funded child care settings by enhancing collaboration between special education and child care staff. The project was located in and administered by Los Angeles Unified School District. Over 80% of the children served through the LAUSD's 710 square mile district are from minority communities and over 50% are non or limited English speaking. At the time of the model development, over 5300 birth-through-four-year-old children were eligible for special education services. In addition, approximately 12,000 children, ages 2-13 were enrolled in over 100 child care centers operated by the school district.

Project Relationship is based on the belief that respectful, responsive relationships among staff, parents and children are necessary to create and sustain a nurturing child care community. During the three years of model development and two years of model refinement and replication, the project provided support and staff development to 11 Children's Centers in the LAUSD. Each Center provided full day child care to approximately 100 children between 2 to 6 years of age and included 6-12 children who were eligible for special education services. Eligible children received support from special education teachers and speech and language therapists on an itinerant basis. Discussions will Children's Center staffs revealed three central themes for which they requested further training and support. (1) How to increase the successful inclusion of children with diverse special needs. (2) How to improve interpersonal communication between staff members. (3) How to develop and implement predictable program practices.

Project Relationship's strength is its focus on problem solving that fosters a process of inquiry, respect, and reflection. Using issues at hand and the staff's capacity to develop site-specific solutions that appreciate individual differences, the structured relationship-based, problem solving framework, called "Going Around the Circle" asks five questions:
(1) What is the concern? (2) Why do you think it is happening? (3) What do you think the behavior is communicating? (4) How can we help? (5) And in subsequent meetings, How is it going?

Fundamental to **Project Relationship** is the belief that (1) all behavior is communication and (2) adults are not interchangeable. The successful inclusion of children with diverse learning styles and challenging behavior was enhanced by identifying individual staff members who would form a "special buddy" relationship with a child in order to (1) identify what the child was trying to communicate, (2) modify adult and environmental expectations and (3) assist the child in learning more adaptive ways to cope.

Project Relationship produced a manual and accompanying video in Year 5 that illustrates the relationship-based problem solving framework developed by special education and child care staff to (1) improve staff communication (2) enhance classroom success for young children (3) enrich program practices for children, staff and families.

III. TABLE OF CONTENTS

IV.	Goals and objectives of the project	1
V.	Theoretical and conceptual framework	4
VI.	Description of the model	11
VII.	Issues in model implementation	27
VIII.	Project Effectiveness	28
IX.	Project Impact	43
X.	Assurances	45

IV. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE PROJECT

Purpose. The purpose of **Project Relationship** was to develop a model for serving preschool age children with disabilities in publicly funded child care. The children displayed social/emotional and behavioral difficulties in addition to delays in language and/or cognitive development. The majority of the children were of racial, ethnic, or linguistic minority status and many had been born to teenage mothers, prenatally exposed to drugs/alcohol, or referred by Child Protective Services.

Significance of the problem to be addressed. On October 8, 1986, Public Law 99-457 was signed by President Gerald Ford. This law was intended to increase both the quantity and the quality of services available to young children with disabilities and their families. Part B of PL 99-457 extended the eligible population for special education and related services delivered through public education agencies to children with disabilities beginning at three years of age. States were given until the 1991-92 school year to implement these new services.

In addition, PL 99-457, Part B, required that the least restrictive educational imperative requirement which guided school age services be applied to programs for preschool age children. Thus, although public educational agencies had not assumed responsibility for serving typical preschool age children, they were responsible for creating services for children with disabilities in settings which included their typical age peers. **Project Relationship** began in the Los Angeles Unified School District on November 1, 1991. It was a cooperative venture between the Division of Special Education and the Child Development Division of the school district. Children being served through school district operated child care programs, called

Children's Centers, who displayed disabilities remained in those least restrictive settings and received necessary special education and related services in those settings. This was accomplished through an ongoing staff development process that focused on building child care and special education teams.

Goals and objectives. Five major goals were accomplished through **Project Relationship**. Each goal was broken down into a number of objectives. These were:

Goal 1. Built a partnership between special education and child care staff, families and community agencies

- 1.1 established liaisons between Divisions of Special Education and Child Development within Los Angeles Unified School District
- 1.2 established a project advisory committee
- 1.3 established a panel of "expert" families
- 1.4 developed a site specific plan for case coordination/resource Coordination
- 1.5 developed a process to assist families with transition to new services
- 1.6 delivered special education and related services in child care and/or home setting as needed

Goal 2. Provided Children's Center staff the knowledge and assistance necessary to support the child with a disability who is demonstrating difficulty coping with classroom expectations.

- 2.1 identified strategies which were being used successfully in Children's Center classroom
- 2.2 identified strategies which families were using at home to handle difficult behavior
- 2.3 evaluated, modified, and adapted strategies identified for use with children prenatally exposed to drugs/alcohol and or challenging behavior for implementation in a regular child care setting
- 2.4 reframed staff and family perceptions of child behavior as needed
- 2.5 conducted ongoing staff development activities in ways that matched the preferred learning styles of staff

Goal 3. Developed written, audio, and video materials which described the procedures used to establish the model practices of **Project Relationship**

3.1 developed and implemented a system for recording all contacts with LAUSD Special Education and Children's Center staffs by **Project Relationship** staff

3.2 developed a procedure to log all videotapes of targeted children by date, setting, and behavior observed

3.3 kept accurate minutes from all multi-agency, interdisciplinary and administrative management meetings related to **Project Relationship**

3.4 conducted evaluations of all staff development activities

3.5 produced an annual report which summarizes the process of implementing the model project

3.6 produced video and accompanying manual to be used as a training tool which illustrates a structured relationship-based problem solving framework used by staff to address day-to-day challenges

Goal 4. Disseminated the findings of **Project Relationship** to appropriate professional, paraprofessional, and parent groups and to agencies serving young children and their families

4.1 identified target groups for dissemination on an ongoing basis

4.2 submitted appropriate proposals and presented sessions for disseminating **Project Relationship** findings at local, state, regional, and national conferences

4.3 submitted print articles to journals, books, and newsletters

4.4 identified other model demonstrations with similar interests and focus and established an ongoing dialogue

4.5 distributed 200-300 copies of video and manual nationwide

Goal 5. Evaluated the management model, use of project resources, and project results on an ongoing basis

5.1 conducted an evaluation of the impact of **Project Relationship** activities on target children and families

5.2 conducted an evaluation of the impact of **Project Relationship** activities on system wide services for young children with disabilities

5.3 monitored **Project Relationship** activities on a weekly/monthly basis through planned management team meetings

V. THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR PROJECT RELATIONSHIP AND ITS IMPACT ON CHILDREN AND ADULTS

In November of 1991, Los Angeles Unified School District was awarded the model demonstration grant from the US Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services. Overtime, the project came to be known as ***Project Relationship***. This name reflected the underlying premise of the project that supportive relationships between service providers, families, and children form the core of successful adjustments for children. The name also reflected the belief that reciprocal relationships between special education itinerant resource personnel and child care staff were equally important in fostering child success.

Project Relationship worked with children, families and staff at 11 publicly funded child care centers, which were administered through the Los Angeles Unified School District. Children with disabilities were not enrolled or specially placed in the Children's Centers. Rather, this was the child care setting selected by their family. Most of the children with disabilities were identified as having problems after they were enrolled. Los Angeles Unified School District, Division of Special Education, Infant/Preschool Programs provided special education itinerant resources to the Centers as a way of maintaining the children in the program of choice of the families, even if they also needed the additional resources available at a special education preschool settings. ***Project Relationship*** staff worked with these resource personnel and the Children's Center staffs to develop a model to maximize child and staff success in the integration effort.

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Behavior Is Communication

The goal of ***Project Relationship*** was to provide support to children with special needs who were having difficulty coping with the demands of a child care setting. The project model focused on the utilization of a structured, relationship based, problem solving framework for helping children, parents and staff address issues and events that effected the functioning of the child and the child care center. The goal was accomplished through the integration of special education personnel as members of the Children's Center's interdisciplinary team and as facilitators of the relationship-based process. The facilitator's role was to support the Children's Center staff in developing solutions that drew on their experiences and matched the style and demands of their setting.

Basic to the ***Project Relationship*** model was the belief that all behavior is communication. Children let us know how well they are coping with the demands of the environment through their behavior. Their behavior is influenced by a wide variety of factors. These include: general health, temperament, developmental and neurological competency, parent-child relationship, previous experiences, relationships with caregivers, and the level of stress and supports experienced by the family and community in which the child is a member. Behavior that is judged to be inappropriate or misbehavior may be a child's way of expressing feelings, needs, and wants. It is the child's way of coping with the expectations of the environment. Thus, the behavior must be examined in terms of what it can tell us about the child, not just in terms of its appropriateness. The task of a teacher or caregiver is to: 1) recognize and understand what the child is trying to communicate, 2) modify adult expectations and environmental conditions that are not

developmentally or temperamentally appropriate, and 3) assist the child in learning more adaptive ways of expressing him/herself and coping with developmentally appropriate child care expectations and demands. Often, changing child behavior is a matter of first examining and changing adult behavior, expectations and responses.

For example, Adriana's teacher reported during a problem solving session that Adriana was constantly pestering her, clinging to her and demanding her attention. She was also not getting along well with other adults in the classroom or her classmates. The teacher indicated that she was tired of her whining and neediness. She wondered what could be done to change this. The facilitator helped lead a problem solving discussion in which all the classroom staff contributed information and thoughts as to why Adriana might be behaving in this way. The team discussed that Adriana had a new baby sister at home and that her family had moved in with her mother's sister's family recently. Now she was one of seven children at home, all under six years of age. They guessed that she was behaving the way she was because she wanted attention. Given her experiences and developmental level, they decided her desire for attention was appropriate, even if her methods for seeking it were not. They selected as an intervention strategy that the teacher would invite Adriana to sit next to her at story time, be her partner on the way in from outdoor time and be her special helper in the classroom for the next week. By the end of the week, Adriana had stopped whining, was not fighting with other children, and agreed to participate in small group and play activities with several other classroom staff. By the fifth day, she even told the teacher it was okay for Jonathan to sit by her, the teacher, at story time. In essence, the staff respected Adriana's need for

a special relationship with an adult in her child care setting. Providing it allowed Adriana to display more appropriate and developmentally complex behavior. Adults changed their expectations and behavior as a way of supporting Adriana.

Children, families, and staff thrive in a setting that is child/family centered and relationship based. Mutual respect develops among staff, families and children when problem solving is framed within the context of supportive relationships. Staff and families see each other as capable of creatively solving problems while supporting each other and, most importantly, children. By reframing behavior in the context of what it is communicating, the focus becomes how staff can help children communicate needs in a more adaptive way. Solutions are not provided by outside experts, e.g., special educators, but grow out of the experiences and knowledge of the child care setting. Special educators become a member of this setting.

Child Care Staff Are Experts

Each Children's Center had its own unique culture. The background of the staff, families and children all influenced the culture. As the Centers were located in an extremely diverse, urban setting, they were impacted by urban problems of poverty, violence, guns, crime, drugs etc. They were enriched by the values and heritage of diverse peoples and cultures. They often had a place of history in local communities. They were a part of the neighborhood. They were places of safety and security for children and families. They served as a link to public education programs for children and families. For newly arrived, and first and second generation immigrant families they were the "translators" of their later experiences with schools and other agencies. Recognition

of the value the Center and staff played in family's lives was essential to becoming a part of the Children's Center team and culture.

The underlying philosophy of ***Project Relationship*** in all staff development efforts was that the needs and wishes of the participants should determine the sequence and content of training activities. Staff development activities were conceptualized as team building experiences. Special education personnel and Children's Center staff members were equals on the team. The relationship that developed was one of colleagues, not teacher-student in nature. The team was recognized as a more capable decision maker that a single staff member. By consulting with the team, all the pieces of the puzzle were identified and then put together.

Overall, Project Relationship grew out of the belief that the continued inclusion of children with disabilities and challenging behavior in community based, publicly funded child care could be successfully accomplished using the experience and expertise of the child care staff. The special education staff served as a resource and facilitator of problem solving. Solutions involved changing adult expectations and behavior, as they worked to help children learn more varied and complex ways of expressing their needs and wants.

The ABC's of Problem Solving.

Initially, the basic approach used to design relationship based interventions rested on the ABC model (Cole, 1996). This approach was used to design staff development activities, child intervention and parent activities. It included:

A= acknowledging individual opinions, feelings and actions

B= building bridges and boundaries

C= creating choice and cooperation

For children, staff and families behavior was viewed as communication. With young children, we interpreted content and feelings by reporting on the actions we saw them displaying and asking them questions that helped define their feelings and reactions. For example, a teacher might say "I saw that you build a high tower with your blocks and then Tommy knocked it down. Was that okay with you?" We also did this by reporting on our own reactions and feelings, e.g., "I would be so mad, if Tommy did that to my tower." Evaluations of children's social/language behavior demonstrated that this helped children learn to express their reactions and feelings verbally. It allowed adults to acknowledge and support the child's reactions and thus build trust.

With adults, a supportive problem solving process allowed them to express opinions, reactions, and feelings openly. This process validated differences in opinions, acceptance of feelings, and encouraged mutual discussion and problem solving. Staff evaluations of **Project Relationship** support activities pointed to their increased comfort in being a member of the team and sharing their ideas and feelings openly.

Acknowledging child and adult actions and expressed feelings built trust. Trust was the cornerstone to team and staff-family relationships. It led staff to explore their values, beliefs, and skills and to grow. Establishing quality relationships among children and staff reduced disruptions and difficulties in the child care setting. It allowed children to make maximum use of their learning opportunities. Establishing quality relationships with families, allowed staff and families to focus on their shared mission of supporting the

development and learning of the children. Establishing quality relationships among staff enhanced job satisfaction and performance.

A trusting relationship allowed children and adults to explore new behavior and master new situations. With children, *building bridges* between their current home and school experiences enhanced their security and stability. *Setting realistic limits and boundaries*, and then helping children to cope and flourish within them, led to the development of autonomy and independence. Staff accomplished this with children by supporting their transition from home to school with specialized greeting and departure routines. They supported transitions within the classroom by helping children master the change from one setting and set of expectations to another.

Through ongoing staff development activities with staff from the Children's Center, bridges were built between their concrete experiences and knowledge and abstract principles that could be used across situations. The focus was on the empowerment of staff to be problem solvers and innovators, not on the specific solutions they chose.

Creating choices for children and adults leads to cooperation. Child misbehavior was reduced by increasing a child's opportunity to choose within an activity or expectation something he/she would like. For example, at lunch time, do you want the hot-dog on the bun or on your plate, while at transition time do you want to go first or wait until the end? Increasing the choices children were allowed to make increased their ability to problem solve and master new situations. Children's "inappropriate" behavior was replaced with self-direction and initiation.

In terms of staff development, choices about place and time of meeting, as well as

the focus of staff development activities was essential, e.g., shall we meet in the evening, on Saturday, over the children's nap time and what topics shall we discuss first? Empowering staff to be the director's of their own development ensured long term follow through.

With parents, providing choices maximized both the opportunity and likelihood of their participation in their child's program. For example, allowing parents to choose the time to meet with staff to discuss child progress increased the likelihood that all parents were able to participate. Participating in their child's program increased the sense of community among families and staff.

VI. DESCRIPTION OF THE MODEL

Project Relationship worked with children, families and staff at 11 publicly funded child care centers, which were administered through the Los Angeles Unified School District. They were located on elementary school campuses. Each Center enrolled approximately 120 children, who ranged in age from 2 through 12 years. **Project Relationship** focused on children between 2 ½ and 6 years of age. The Children's Centers were open from 6:00 am- 6:00 pm. Enrollment priority was given to children who were referred by Department of Children's Services. Parents were required to be working or attending school. Families qualified as impoverished according to federal guidelines. Centers were staffed by a combination of certificated and classified personnel.

Children with disabilities were not enrolled or specially placed in the Centers. Rather, this was the child care setting selected by their family. Most of the children with disabilities were identified as having problems after they were enrolled. Los Angeles

Unified School District, Division of Special Education, Infant/Preschool Programs decided to provide special education itinerant resources to the Centers as a way of maintaining the children in the program of choice of the families, even if they also needed the additional resources available at a special education preschool settings. ***Project Relationship*** staff worked with these resource personnel and the Children's Center staffs to develop a model to maximize child and staff success in the integration effort. Between 6 and 12 children were identified at each Children's Center as displaying disabilities. In the initial grant proposal, support for 20-24 children per year was projected. In actuality, during any given year of the model development phase of **Project Relationship**, 3 or 4 Centers were involved in staff development activities. Thus, 24-36 children with disabilities were impacted by **Project Relationship** support and staff development activities. In addition, children without disabilities were also impacted. During implementation, for each child with a disability who displayed challenging behavior, there were 1 or 2 typical children also identified as displaying challenging behavior. While these children did not receive special education and related services under Part B or **Project Relationship**, staff did use the principals and strategies learned through the ongoing staff development effort to support these children. In many cases, this resulted in children's behavior improving before a referral to special education was necessary.

Five important components of a relationship-based, problem solving framework were identified. They were: (1) identifying staff-generated issues for problem solving; (2) gathering information from all concerned so that the problem is stated from all points of view; (3) recognizing all behavior is communication by asking participants to explore the

interactions and relationships of staff, families, and children involved; (4) discussing possible solutions and barriers in order to reach consensus about a potential course of action; (5) and in subsequent meetings; reviewing the process, evaluating and modifying the plans as necessary.

Gathering information about the issue/event of concern from all involved members of the Children's Center was essential, and difficult in the Children's Center setting due to staffing patterns. Opinions needed to be expressed and listened to. This process provided comprehensive and differing perspectives and perceptions of the situation, and validated the diversity of ideas and values among the team members. Feelings were as important as the objective information, in order for the team to build community and come to an authentic consensus in the problem resolution. Once consensus was reached, barriers were identified and possibilities for resolving them explored. A plan of action was then developed with specific responsibilities for each member of the team. Changes needed to support and implement the plan, such as role changes among staff or changes in room assignment of children, were then clearly identified and implemented as well. Periodic reviews of how the plan was working and how team members were feeling about the changes made were built into the planning process.

Facilitating this planning process was the role of ***Project Relationship*** staff along with special education itinerant resource personnel assigned to the Children's Centers by LAUDS. Initially, all facilitation was done by ***Project Relationship*** staff. In this third year, the resource staff began to assume this role. They continued in this role at the 3 Children's Centers which served as model and replication sites for Years Four and Five.

The role of the facilitator included recording, reflecting ideas and opinions, reframing ideas and opinions, reminding, reinforcing and reviewing. The facilitator framed questions which helped the participants capitalize on their expertise to solve problems.

For example, during an initial staff development session, participants indicated that afternoon staff often did not know what morning staff had experienced with the children. This was very frustrating for the children and the staff. The facilitator led the group through the following questions in order to solve this frustration: What is the concern? Why do you think it is happening? What is this behavior communicating? What are the barriers to doing this? What steps are needed to overcome the barriers? What is the group consensus? What is the plan of action? How can the plan be implemented? Who plays what role in implementing the plan? In this case, the team decided that they needed a communication book, which would be hung on a bulletin board by the door to the room. Staff would write down significant events for individual children before they ended their shift; arriving staff would read the notes upon entering the classroom. The principal would supply the book. The book became part of the Center's operational procedures. It's value and use was shared with new staff. The book continued to be used through all five years of the project.

Implementing the *Project Relationship* Model

Implementing an ongoing staff development project in 11 Children's Centers required individualized planning with the site administrators (Principals) and 4 special education itinerant resource teams. Applying the initial ABC approach in a consistent fashion required attention to children, staff, and family concerns, issues, and realities.

Some of the more salient issues which arose during project implementation are outlined below.

Children's Issues and Concerns. Fundamental to ***Project Relationship*** was the belief that in child-adult relationships adults are not interchangeable. Children select adults with whom to develop significant relationships for a reason. Adults form significant relationships with particular children for a reason. Acknowledging the authenticity of this match provided a basis for understanding how the child's behavior was adaptive in getting needs and wants met. The relationship provided the adult with the information necessary to create a balance between the child's need for autonomy and need for support. A child-centered, relationship based philosophy allowed adults to address the needs of children within the context of the child's individual biological, developmental, and family realities. A relationship based problem solving process offered insight into the needs of children and built-in guidance on helping children who were having difficulty coping with classroom expectations. Having adults simply behave in a prescribed or set manner did not guarantee that the child was supported in the development of independence.

The relationship between the child and the significant adult impacted on how support and assistance was perceived and responded to by the child. Adults needed permission to realize that they may be "a better match" with one child than another. Staff problem solving about how to help a child who was having difficulty coping needed to include this differentiation of roles among staff, i.e., one designated staff member may have needed to assume the role of primary person for the child, rather than spreading the child among many staff.

Personalized, individual attention was seen as critical to child coping and mastery of more and more complex developmental tasks. The art of teaching rests on the adult being able to respond to individual child generated wants, ideas, needs, and reactions. The adult operated in a child responsive curricular format in which each child's cognitive and **social-emotional** needs and strengths were taken into account. Specific responses to child behavior were not determined just by general rules, but also by the experiences of the individual child. This truly developmentally appropriate approach was individually guided by the unique needs and characteristics of the child, not a set list of skills, tasks or activities to be mastered. For ***Project Relationship*** to be effective the Children's Center staff needed assistance in designing ways for children to receive individual attention.

Family Issues and Concerns. A relationship based on mutual respect and a shared sense of mission between the family and child care staff was essential. Fundamental to ***Project Relationship*** was the belief that family values, experiences, and expectations shaped the development of children and the family's relationship with service providers. Families can be capable and competent decision makers on behalf of their families. They want their children to succeed and want to be helpful in that process. When their children were having difficulty coping with the demands of the child care setting, they wanted to be consulted as to what might help, without fearing that the child might be removed. The families relied on the Children's Centers in order to work and/or go to school. They needed the consistency and intensity of care provided in the all day child care setting. If their child needed special help, they wanted it to be provided in conjunction with the

program at the Children's Center. If the child needed additional resources from a preschool special education setting, they wanted that coordinated with the Children's Center program. They wanted their commitment to the child and their needs as adults to be recognized. For ***Project Relationship*** to succeed staff needed assistance in building individual relationships with families. Often through a special relationship with an individual staff member, parents acknowledged the child's special needs and sought assistance. As with children, adults were not interchangeable with parents.

Staff Issues and Concerns. Working with children and families from diverse backgrounds and with diverse needs, stirred up feelings and issues for staff. The demands of forming relationships with children, families and other staff members were considerable. Staff needed support and time to explore how who they were and where they came from impacted on their capacity to relate to children and families. Staff required support for the experiences they brought to relationship based problem solving. They could be capable and competent problem solvers. They had the answers as to how to help children and families who were having difficulty coping; they needed to be asked the right questions so the answers developed. Staff needed to be provided the opportunity and support necessary to communicate and work together. Due to the complexity of staffing a twelve hour a day program, staff often did not get to meet and plan together consistently. They ended up operating on half the information they needed to be effective. Methods to smooth communication and insure information exchange across staff were essential. Allowing staff to make decisions as to child classroom placement, special caregiving arrangements and classroom structure insured staff follow

through on plans. ***Project Relationship*** succeeded because staff were provided the time and support necessary to become effective problem solvers.

Structure And Process Of Ongoing Staff Development

Site Selection. Seven Children's Centers served as the initial sites for ***Project Relationship***. These Centers were selected because they were geographically spaced around the area of Los Angeles Unified School District, represented the diversity of children and families served in the child care setting, and had special education itinerant resource teams assigned to identify and meet the needs of children with disabilities. During the first phase of the project, the first six months, intensive observations were conducted in these Centers in order to familiarize ourselves with the inner working of the Children's Centers. A major focus was to identify the strengths of the Centers and to understand what place they played in their communities and with families. Periodic meetings were held with Center Principals and the Director of LAUDS's child development programs. Special education itinerant resource teams assigned to the Centers were a vital link and served as a valuable source of information on current practices within the Centers. In addition, the teaching assistant hired with ***Project Relationship*** funds rotated among the Centers and spent two to four weeks on each site learning about operations and staffing patterns. She worked under the supervision of the Project Coordinator who with the Project Evaluator and Curriculum Specialist converted this information to an analysis of LAUDS Children's Centers their strengths, capabilities and needs. This analysis was presented to the Center Principals in June of the first year and is contained in the Project Evaluation section.

An outgrowth of this process was the recognition that staff development at the various Centers would need to be site specific and the content and its sequence determined in consultation with the staff themselves. If staff needed to work extra hours to participate in staff development sessions, they were paid for this time through project funds at an LAUDS negotiated training rate. This was $5.00 per hour for classified staff, $8.00 per hour for certificated staff.

The first step in the staff development process was the completion of a single contact workshop on one of six topics selected by the staff. The topics were generated from the analysis of the Centers and discussions with Principals. The proposed topics were:

Children Prenatally Exposed To Drugs: Myths And Realities

Working With Families

Behavior Is Communication

Communicating With Children, Families And Staff

Discipline: New Ideas

Children's Feelings

Staff from the Centers selected a topic and the time and manner in which they would like the presentation to take place. Choices varied from three, one hour presentations across the day so staff on various shifts could participate, to a three hour early evening presentation, to an all day Saturday workshop. Staff development sessions took place during the fall of 1992. Attendance at the sessions, although not mandatory, was over 90 percent. Workshop evaluations were uniformly very positive. One frequently

occurring written comment was "they made me feel like I had something to contribute." The questionnaire used for the workshops is contained in Appendix B. After the initial workshop, four Centers were selected for ongoing staff development activities. While all seven Centers wanted to continue to participate, this was not possible with the limited resource available through ***Project Relationship***.

Centers were selected based on working with all three special education itinerant resource teams, geography spread in the city, and presence of a high number of children being referred for special education services. An organizational meeting was scheduled at each of the continuing Centers for late fall of 1992 or early winter of 1993. At this meeting staff decided with the facilitation of ***Project Relationship*** staff and their Center Principal how they would like to proceed. They selected the topics to be addressed, when meetings would take place, and who would be involved. ***Project Relationship*** staff accommodated whatever requests they made. Over the next six to nine months, ongoing staff development activities continued at the four Centers.

During all this time, special education itinerant resource team and ***Project Relationship*** staff members met monthly to coordinate efforts and brainstorm strategies to maximize the effectiveness of the Center directed staff development efforts. These meetings served as a forum to review where we were in articulating our model and how service delivery was going to children. They helped to guide our efforts to become facilitators of a relationship based problem solving strategy. Since the special education itinerant resource teams were in the Children's Centers on a day-to-day basis, they were very aware of the constraints of the Centers and strategies that might be effective.

Contained in Appendix C are notes from these monthly meetings which document the development of the model.

Summarized in the following table is the pattern of staff development chosen by each of the model development sites.

SITE	DATE 1ST INSERVICE COMPLETED	TOPIC	ONGOING PATTERN SELECTED	CURRENT STATUS 10/96
CABRILLO	10/7/92 2 hr. evening	Discipline	Friday noon for 1 hr.;5 sessions re. one child	Site dropped due to LAUDS reorganization
EL SERENO	11/4/92 2-1 ½ hr daytime	Behavior is Communication	Site not selected	Fully included sp ed class 1-96
MONTE VISTA	8/22/92 5 hr. Saturday	Staff Communication	2 groups meet bi weekly, daytime	Fully included sp class 9-95
PACOIMA	10/27/92 2-1 ½ hr. evening	Helping Children With Feelings	6 evening meetings scheduled for Year 2&3	Completed Year 2 and 3; site served by itinerant sp ed personnel
6TH AVENUE	10/13/92 3-1 hr daytime	Children Prenatally Exposed to Drugs: Myths & Realities	not selected as an ongoing site; support provided for 1 child	
VAUGHN	11/11/92 3,-11/2 hr evening	Behavior Is Communica-tion	scheduled 6 evening meetings	completed Year 2 and 3; site served by itinerant sp ed
WILTON PLACE	1/19, 2/2, 2/9 of 93 3, 1 hr daytime	Behavior is Communica-tion	not selected as an ongoing site	

At the beginning of the 1993-1994 school year, special education itinerant resource personnel were assigned to two new Children's Centers. These Centers were added to ***Project Relationship***, as initial replication sites. They began the process of site, specific, topical inservice during late fall and early winter. The following fall a third site was added as a replication site.

SITE	DATE 1ST INSERVICE COMPLETED	TOPIC	ONGOING PATTERN SELECTED	CURRENT STATUS
TELFAIR	11/18/93 1 hr. daytime	Needs Assessment	1 hr. over lunch monthly	completed 1 yr.
WEST-MINSTER	2/6/94 5 hr. Saturday	Children Prenatally Exposed to Drugs	2 hrs in the evening over 5 visits	completed 2 yrs./site served by itinerant sp ed
BROOKLYN	9/23/95 4 hr. Saturday	Behavior is Commun-ication	4 hr. Sat over 5 visits + classroom team mtgs each 1 hr. monthly	completed 1 ½ years; site served by itinerant sp. ed.

The Relationship- Based Problem Solving Framework

As described previously in this document, the relationship- based problem solving framework was based on the idea that with support and facilitation child care and special education staff could work together as equals on an interdisciplinary team. Staff development became a process of working together to identify needs and areas for

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discussion and problem solving. A set curriculum or activities were not used to train staff in a particular approach to working with children, each other, or families. Rather the facilitators role was to build an environment of trust and respect, so that diverse opinions could be shared. The facilitator asked questions which helped participants draw on their day-to-day experiences, both successes and failures, to solve problems.

In our work with the ongoing staff development sites, we identified common areas of concern which were usually addressed within the first year. These were:

Communication: Who needs to know?

Elements of a successful day in Children's Centers

Importance of a group process

Time to plan: Scheduling staff meetings

Working with parents

Comings and goings: Transitions, beginnings and endings, routines and rituals

Helping children cope with sensitive topics

Helping children cope with their neighborhoods

The Creative Curriculum

Helping children with challenging behavior

Being flexible and individually sensitive

Centers addressed the topics in different orders and in different ways, but for the most part all topics were discussed at one time or another. We saw that allowing staff to direct the timetable of when and for how long topics are a focus was essential. This

empowered staff to lead their own change plan. It was very successful at keeping staff participation in what was essentially voluntary staff development activities very high.

As an outgrowth of this individualized process, we discovered that a modified focus group or "Around the Circle" process of soliciting input was very helpful. In this way, all staff contributed ideas and opinions, and the facilitator had the opportunity to continually model valuing individuality and differing perspectives. Staff learned that everyone had information that was helpful in problem solving and that hearing from everyone was essential to developing a plan which worked for the whole Center.

In terms of helping staff learn to use the initial ABC approach for designing intervention for **children with challenging behavior**, the "Around the Circle" process was a real plus. The facilitator was able to draw from the group's contributions ideas which were supportive of individualizing expectations for children. We identified through the relationship- based problem solving sessions five questions which set the stage for creating individual solutions for children. These questions and potential discussion topics for each are listed below.

(1) What are you concerns about _____?

Describe the child and his behavior

When is the behavior most likely to occur? With whom?

(2) Why do you think the behavior is happening?

We know children behave for a reason, what might be the reasons?

What about child's developmental competence could be having an impact?

What about child's experience could be having an impact?

What about child's temperament could be having an impact?

What do parents think about what's happening?

Why have other children like this child behaved like this?

Is anything happening at school to contribute?

(3) What is the behavior communicating?

How does the child go about getting his/her needs and wants met?

Who does the child go to for help? Comfort? Fun?

Who has fun with the child?

Who does the child like/who likes the child?

Who likes children like this?

(4) How can we help? (The intervention plan)

Would changing expectations help?

Would changing group assignment help?

Do we need to approach the child differently?

Who will be the child's special buddy?

Do we need to change staff schedules?

Do we need to approach the child differently?

Do we need to communicate differently?

(5) How is it going? What worked and why? Changes Needed?

Describe the child now?

Why the changes we see?

What's next?

Are there other children we should try this with?

As special education itinerant resource and Children's Center staff learned to use this relationship- based problem solving process for individual children, they also began

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to apply some of what they learned to the Centers as a whole. Changes made for individual children were often seen as helpful to the group as a whole, e.g., reducing the number of transitions during the morning. Thus, over time the Centers' abilities to provide appropriate services to a wide variety of children increased. When children needed special help, the assignment of a relationship/buddy teacher became more of a preventive strategy. The recognition that young children needed relationships which fostered autonomy and security increased as well.

Outcomes

Five major outcomes of **Project Relationship** were identified. They can be summarized as the development of a model and process to:

- implement a relationship-based problem solving process to address child, family and staff issues;
- incorporate special education itinerant resource staff into publicly funded child care centers;
- support an interdisciplinary team at the child care sites;
- implement a site specific, staff generated model of ongoing staff development for the teams;
- produce a training manual and video which describes:

(1) Building Authentic Relationships to Improve Staff Communication

(2) Increasing Personalized Interactions to Enhance Classroom Success for Young Children

VII. ISSUES IN MODEL IMPLEMENTATION

The Los Angeles Unified School District's Divisions of Special Education and Child Development worked closely together to insure the smooth implementation of the model demonstration project. This allowed for the itinerant special education staff who worked in the various Children's Center to remain essentially the same across the three years of model development. The Children's Centers Principals were enthusiastic in their support of the ongoing staff development activities allowing for consistency in the child care staff involved in the model phase of the project. Due to changes in administration, one of the initial Children's Centers chosen for model development activities was replaced during the second year. Since many more Children's Centers for interested in project involvement than the project staff could accommodate, this posed no problem for the continuity and success of the model development.

During the project replication phase, the initial model sites continued to utilize the Project Relationship model and staff became involved in materials development activities. The replication sites at Westminster, Telfair, and Brooklyn were successful in implementing the model with the leadership of the itinerant special education and Project Relationship staff members. Again, more Children's Centers were interested in joining Project Relationship, than the project could accommodate.

Overall, problems in model development and replication were minimal. The five

goals of the project were readily accomplished. A partnership between families and schools was established that supported the successful inclusion of children with disabilities and challenging behavior in the publicly funded child care programs operated by the second largest school district in the United States. Staff in these programs were included as experts on an interdsicplinary team that utilized relationship- based problem solving to improve program practices and communication among staff and with families. Project resources were carefully monitored and child progress and staff development were regularly evaluated. The Project Relationship framework for problem solving was disseminated through print, video, and workshops.

VIII. PROJECT EFFECTIVENESS

Evaluation of **Project Relationship's** effectiveness was an ongoing process. On a day-to-day basis, attainment of Project goals and objectives was reviewed in management team meetings. The effectiveness of the ongoing staff development activities was measured through feedback from Children's Center staff participants, Children's Center Principals and special education itinerant resource team members. Monthly meetings were held between the **Project Relationship** staff and special education itinerant resource team members to monitor Project effectiveness. Feedback from Children's Center and special education itinerant resource team members was used to evaluate whether the relationship based, problem solving strategy was helpful to staff and individual children.

Learning About Children's Centers

One of the first tasks of the project was to learn about the culture and operation of Children's Centers. Intensive observations were conducted in the Centers for first six months of the project. Monthly meetings with the special education itinerant resource teams focused on gathering input about strengths and needs of the Centers. This information was summarized and presented to the Children's Center Principals in June 1992. The information gained was grouped into categories of *program management, children's program, family involvement and special education resource team role*. Three basic questions were addressed. The responses gathered from the special education itinerant resource teams are summarized below by question and categories.

What has been positive in your experience at Children's Centers?

Program management

- staff is eager for and open to help
- special education staff is well received
- principals are working to provide further training to their staff
- principals complement staff on how they are handling situations
- attempts are being made to hold weekly staff meetings
- staff is changing and learning
- permanent teachers are assigned and see themselves as agents of change
- staff is pleased to be receiving inservice on the *Creative Curriculum*

Children's program

- staff doing a pretty good job of dealing with large number of needy kids
- children are very resourceful
- center can be a stable, comforting, predictable place for children; more so than some of their homes

small groups for children are starting
more outdoor activities are being added
environment has been changed based on inservice, e.g., blocks are out, shelves are repaired, more open
children are being allowed more choices
more options are available for children to be supported in small groups

Special education itinerant resource role

staff are seeing resource staff as working with the "whole" child and not just "parts" that need help

What are the challenges at the Children's Centers?

Program management

the schedule is the tail that wags the dog
variety in levels of staff commitment, e.g., job vs. career
staff is stressed, wants to do what's best for kids, must balance demands of the Center and large group
staff not necessarily trained to work as member of a team
not clear how and when information is communicated across staff
teaching assistants do not have clear input into the program

Children's program

not clear how and when materials are adapted for various activities
not clear whether there is a daily plan or schedule being followed or how it is communicated
child choices are not consistently sought or respected by staff
clear routines and rituals are not evident

Special education itinerant resource role

hard to make fundamental changes needed across the program when contact is with one child and not whole staff
still working to get staff to ask us questions and seek us out for assistance
insufficient staff to meet with children and families

In your role as special education itinerant resource staff, what concerns do you have about working in the Children's Centers?

Program management

- how are program expectations communicated to staff and children?
- what constitutes appropriate materials and how to access them
- how to balance the child's needs of independence and autonomy, which Centers foster easily, with nurturing support which Centers have a hard time providing
- is there a policy around separation that is designed to help the children?
- how are children supported/handled who are displaying anger, distress, sadness, fear etc.?

Family involvement

- staff have fragmented relationships with families
- not clear who knows family best, has all the information
- not clear how staff learn relevant family information

Special education itinerant resource role

- special education resource staff recognize they were not trained to work with adults
- staffing and scheduling restrictions which limit our ability to translate information about specific child needs and programs
- how we will have access to families
  - no telephones
  - meetings on the fly
  - literacy level
  - language barriers
  - need for translators
- developing guidelines for translators and interpreters
- how to help staff to make sensible, integrated whole child decisions
- how to help Children's Center staff provide enough materials to be used freely
- defining attachment and relationships

Based on this information and discussions with the Principals, a plan for ongoing staff development was conceptualized and implemented. The plan entailed two phases. The first phase was site specific topical inservices to be conducted between August-

November of 1992. The second phase was staff developed sessions, which would continue for the duration of the model development phase of the project.

One of the major challenges at the Children's Centers was designing a system which would support **ongoing** staff development sessions. As staff work "shifts" of varying length, all staff who were involved with or concerned about a particular child were not working in the Center at one time. In order to build a cohesive team and assist staff to learn the relationship based model of problem solving, **Project Relationship** funds were used to pay staff who came to sessions during nonwork hours. As staff learned the process, they began to use it in their day-to-day interactions about children. Project success ultimately rested on this real world use. Transferring the facilitation of the relationship-based problem solving sessions to the special education itinerant resource team members assisted in bridging the process into paid staff hours.

Monthly Planning Meetings With Special Education Itinerant Resource Team Members

Once a month, **Project Relationship** and special education itinerant resource team members met to conduct project planning and evaluation. A fairly standard agenda was used for these meetings. It consisted of "What's New at the Children's Centers"," A Review of Caseloads", "A Grant Update", "Continuing Discussion of **Project Relationship** And Resource Team Roles in The Children's Centers", "Planning For The Next Meeting." Periodically an all day session was held to work on delineating aspects

of the **Project Relationship** model and to work on materials and activities to be used with Children's Center staff in the ongoing sessions and contact.

Initially these meetings helped ground our learning about the structure and operation of the Children's Centers. They were essential for attaining the first year's project objectives. They served as the basis for building the Project Relationship and special education itinerant resource team which would work with the selected Centers on a ongoing basis in Year 2 and 3. The meetings allowed for an ongoing gathering of information on how Children's Center staff were incorporating the special education team into their interdisciplinary team. After the ongoing staff development sessions began at the Children's Centers, the monthly **Project Relationship** and special education itinerant resource team meeting served as a method of gathering data on whether or not the ongoing staff development sessions were resulting in actual changes in staff behavior and Center operations. The information generated through the meetings served, in a sense, as a social validity check. We selected this model for evaluating change, because it is grounded in the real world day-to-day functioning of the Children's Centers. The experts on whether the staff development efforts were effective were the staff themselves. We combined this social validity approach with a single case/subject approach.

During the "What's New" discussion, special education itinerant resource team members shared examples of changes in staff behavior which they observed during their weekly visits to the center classrooms. They provided information on how the target

children were responding in the setting and how staff were interacting with and describing the children. Minutes from the meetings detailed examples of the changes noted, e.g., a Children's Center staff member was observed to say before leaving to attend a meeting, "Let's see, I told the children I was leaving and where I was going, I told them when I would be back, I told them they could check with Ms. C. if they needed special help...hm, is there anything else I need to let them know?" This was after ongoing staff sessions underscored how preparation for change, e.g., greetings and departures rituals for children, helps reduce disruptive behavior.

Overall, the special education itinerant resource teams saw the Children's Center staff use the ongoing staff development sessions to restructure classroom schedules, plan transitions for children, work on better adult-to-adult communication, and make adaptations in rules and routines for individual children. After 6-12 months of input, the Children's Center staff began to use the staff development sessions to focus on specific strategies, adapted from the initial ABC intervention approach, that they could try with children. This finding reinforces the need to build a relationship with staff overtime and develop trust in order to move into fine grained changes in adult teaching or interaction style. The changes needed to come from the staffs' discussion and problem solving, rather than from outside experts presenting solutions e.g., at each transition time you should give John special reminders of where he is going. Staff needed time to share their expertise, opinions, and feelings before listening to and incorporating new strategies

from others. The investment of time was very worthwhile. Staff saw the relationship-based problem solving strategy as their own.

The discussion of "**Project Relationship** and Special Education Itinerant Resource Team Roles" in the Children's Center continued to be critical to preparing for the maintenance of the Project model Year 4 and 5 at the initial model development sites. The special education itinerant resource team took on the facilitation role which had been carried out by **Project Relationship** staff. In fact, they began this process in January of 1994 and had 10 months of practice by the time we went into the replication phase of the project. Ultimately, the success of including children with disabilities in these publicly funded child care settings rested with district paid direct service staff. Taking on this type of facilitation and adult learning role was a new one for these teams. Support of this was a major focus during Year 3, 4, and 5.

Evaluation Of Ongoing Staff Development Activities

The single session topical inservice sessions were all evaluated by the participants on the day they were completed. The form used for this purpose focused on gathering information on the structure of the inservice and how useful participant's felt the information would be in their day-to-day work with children, families and each other. The questions and responses across the Centers are summarized below.

Single Session Evaluation

This inservice was	interesting	100%
	boring	
	too long	
	too short	21%
	just right	79%
	well organized	98%
	somewhat organized	2%
	poorly organized	
The presenters were	very knowledgeable	85%
	knowledgeable	15%
	unknowledgeable	
	very enthusiastic	76%
	enthusiastic	24%
	unenthusiastic	
The presenters valued my opinion	yes	100%
	sometimes	
	no	
How much did you learn that can help you with your job?		
	nothing	1%
	a little	1%
	some	16%
	a lot	82%
Overall, this inservice was	excellent	81%
	good	19%
	fair	
	poor	

Inspection of these figures indicates that the material and style of presentation used matched participants needs. Given that they selected the topics and times of the sessions, this was not surprising. **Project Relationship** staff were very pleased to see that participants felt that the information would be helpful in their day-to-day responsibilities at the Children's Centers. Answers to open ended questions confirmed the above findings and highlighted that the staff really appreciated the opportunity to meet in small problem solving groups which were incorporated in to all sessions. They appreciated the practical suggestion that by attending to a child's needs and wants disruptive behavior could be reduced. Staff noted that the informality of the meetings helped them feel comfortable and open up about their concerns and needs. They felt that their opinions and ideas were valued and respected.

Ongoing staff development activities were also reviewed periodically at the 3 intensive training sites during the model development and replication phases of the project. Feedback was provided using a focus group format approximately quarterly and using written questionnaires once a year. The questions asked and responses from the Centers are summarized below.

Ongoing Staff Development

The inservice meetings are	very important	65%
	important	35%
	somewhat important	
	not important	
The length of the meetings is	just right	78%
	too long	4%

	too short	18%
How often we meet is	just right	83%
	too often	
	not often enough	17%
The discussions at the meetings are		
	very helpful	83%
	helpful	13%
	somewhat helpful	4%
	not helpful	
How much did you learn that can help you with your job?	nothing	
	a little	
	some	9%
	a lot	91%
How successful have the meetings been at helping you to solve day-to-day issues at the Center?	very successful	57%
	successful	39%
	a little successful	4%
	not successful	
Do you want the meetings to continue?	yes	96%
	no	4%
	not sure	

Participants also responded to open ended questions. When asked to describe in their own words the purpose of the ongoing sessions, they pointed to communication and the opportunity to share ideas and problem solve as a staff. Topics which they found most helpful to discuss ranged from transitions, to giving children choices, to individual differences, to listening to each other and children. They pointed to new things they have

learned to do with children such as listening, giving difficult children more positive attention, being more patient and seeing things from the child's point of view. They also indicated that they had learned some skills and strategies for communicating better with each other, such as writing down important information to be transmitted and listening to a wide variety of opinions before formulating solutions. They felt it was important to meet as a staff because it helped them understand each other, communicate more openly and completely, and solve problems.

An analysis of these evaluation data points to the multiple purposes that **Project Relationship** had in the Centers. We were not just there to talk about how to do things differently with target children. We were there to help build an interdisciplinary team, which could work together to solve problems as they arose. In essence, we build relationships with staff at Children's Centers so that they could build new/different relationships with children, parents, and each other. We shared skills in the context of these relationships which helped with the day-to-day operation of the Children's Centers and the successful integration of children with disabilities. We expected to see changes in staff attitude and behavior, as well as seeing that children were continuing to be included, rather than excluded from the Children's Center environment. Some of the desired changes were that staff would:

- show an increase in positive interactions with each other
- build relationships among themselves differently, e.g., new staff will be greeted and introduced and staff departures will be recognized
- be less judgmental of families

- increase their contact with parents and have parents more involved
- increase their positive comments about children
- increase the number and types of explanations they use in describing why a child may be behaving in a particular way
- increase the frequency and appropriateness of their individualization of children's programs
- increase modifications and adaptations they make to schedule and activities
- change their communication patterns with children by using expansions, explaining choices, asking questions rather than giving directions
- increase their requests for assistance from the special education resource team

An analysis of the actual interactions which occurred during the ongoing sessions indicated that many of these changes were accomplished. The staff were able, in the context of the relationship based-problem solving framework, to analyze multiple reasons for why a child was behaving in a particular way. Their explanations took into account child experience, temperament, and development. They pointed to the fact that the child was trying to communicate with his/her behavior. The child was telling us what was going on for them. The staff readily brainstormed supports that could be provided to individual children requiring curriculum, staff, materials, and schedule adaptations. They recognized the need to plan for staff and child transitions from the Center. They took pictures, made cards, planned special events to mark comings and goings. They accepted responsibility for insuring that a child who was having difficulty coping had a special relationship teacher or buddy available to assist them.

Over 200 hours of videotapes taken of the ongoing staff development filmed at various meetings over a three year were reviewed and edited. Three significant themes emerged from the staff development videos that challenged all Children's Center staffs across site diversity, location, and culture. These were: (1) increasing the successful inclusion of the many young children with diverse learning styles having difficulty coping with the demands of being in group care; (2) interpersonal communication with each other and between special education staff and child care teachers, and (3) developing and implementing predictable program practices. The training video produced during Year 4 and 5 and addressed these three central challenges. The training video and accompanying manual illustrate how relationship-based problem solving facilitates a process inquiry, reflection and respect for staff that (1) improves staff communication, (2) enhances child success and (3) enriches program practices.

Information On The Success of Integration

The basic approach taken in monitoring the success of integration efforts was again based on a social validation model, using a single case approach. The opinions of the staff who were working with the children formed the core of this analysis. The intensive sites where ongoing staff development occurred all successfully maintained the children with disabilities who were in their settings. In fact, the Principals opened their doors to additional children with problems. Staff descriptions of the children pointed to changes in how the children were coping and handling stress. Disruptive and inappropriate behavior was not considered to be a problem in target children, even

though it had not miraculously disappeared. Staff recognized that children need support and that their misbehavior may be appropriate to the circumstances in which they find themselves, their developmental competence and their temperament. Children's development was monitored through the district's IEP process. Steady progress was shown on goals and objectives.

All of the Principals indicated that they had seen staff apply what they learned in the ongoing staff development sessions with children in the classrooms. They pointed to an increase in adapting for individual children and planning more consistent and simpler transitions. They saw staff as being better listeners with children and with each other. They also noted that the techniques which staff has learned to use with children with special needs were successfully being carried over to other children in the Center. Staff used less "punishment" strategies and more redirection and support. Choices for children increased. Staff were more able to work together to constructively plan for and meet the needs of all children at the Center. One hundred percent believed that the **Project Relationship** ongoing staff development activities were helpful for their staffs. Quotes from the Principals and staff themselves were used in the Project Relationship training manual, produced during Year 4 and 5 of the project. Staff incorporated new understanding that building authentic relationships, increasing personalized interaction and developing supportive routines and rituals can increase the successful inclusion of children with challenging behaviors in the child care setting.

IX. PROJECT IMPACT

Five years after the passage of PL 99-457 and the inception of **Project Relationship** in the Los Angeles Unified School District, 30 Children's Centers are receiving support from special education itinerant resource teams. This allows 200-300 young children with disabilities to be served in their neighborhood regular education early childhood setting. Eleven Children's Centers have full inclusion programs for children with more severe disabilities in which a special education teacher and teaching assistants are in the Center on a full time basis. This provides a fully included placement for another 100-200 children per year. Thus, the work and findings of **Project Relationship** extended far beyond the original model development and replication sites. Because the project was an ongoing part of the service delivery system in the school district, project staff were integrally involved in planning for preschool services. The administrative personnel in the early childhood area in the district were able to use the success of **Project Relationship** to support their plans to build inclusive services for young children with disabilities. The project helped bring together two divisions, Special Education and Child Development, that had not traditionally planned together on behalf of young children. The support of the Coordinator of Infant and Preschool Programs in the Division of Special Education and the Children's Center Principals was critical in this process. Today in the Los Angeles Unified School District if a three year old child is identified as having a disability and needing to receive services in a setting where there is maximal contact with his/her typical, chronological age peers services are available.

If this child has challenging behavior, in addition to a disability, services are still available. Through a grant from the California Endowment, Children's Health Initiative, the work of **Project Relationship** is being extended to an additional 10-15 Children's Centers in the next year.

In order to insure that **Project Relationship** continues to be implemented in LAUSD and other communities, a training video and manual on the project were produced during Year 4 and 5. Entitled "Project Relationship: Creating and Sustaining a Nurturing Community," they are available from the Division of Special Education of the Los Angeles Unified School District. Together they summarize the basic tenets of **Project Relationship** and the steps to its implementation. A copy of both is enclosed with this final report.

During the five years of the project, numerous presentations were made at local, state, regional, and national conferences. For example, the project was discussed at conferences for the State Departments of Education in California and in Arkansas, an all day preconference workshop was held at the annual Division for Early Childhood Conference, a half day training was presented for the Region VIII, IX and X Resource Access Projects, a 2 ½ hour workshop was presented at the Montana Council for Exceptional Children annual conference and for staff from Southwest Human Development in Phoenix, and a 45 minute segment on the project was presented as part of an all day national teleconference on young children exposed to alcohol and drugs. Audiences for presentations on **Project Relationship** have included child care staff,

preschool teachers, special education teachers, teacher assistants, administrators, school psychologists, parents, and speech and language therapists. The basic principals of the project can be applied in a wide variety of settings, with a wide diversity of children, by a wide range of disciplines. That dramatically increases its applicability and generalizability.

X. ASSURANCES

Copies of the final report have been sent to the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services and ERIC Clearinghouse on Handicapped and Gifted Children. Copies of the title page and abstract/executive summary have been sent to NEC*TAS, National Clearinghouse for Professionals in Special Education, National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities (NICHCY), Technical Assistance for Parent Programs Project (TAPP), National Diffusion Network (NDN), Child and Adolescent Service Systems Program (CASSP), and the Regional Resource Centers.

For further information or copies of the video and manual "**Project Relationship**" contact:

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